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16 October 2023

Dear Richard

I write in response to your letter of 27 September 2023 requesting further information on the current and future dental workforce in Scotland.

In your letter, with reference to the current position of 55 dentists per 100,000 of the population in Scotland, you requested a breakdown of headcount and WTE for dentists including a trend over the last ten years. In response, I would like to direct you to [data intelligence](#) published six-monthly by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) which sets out statistics on the dental workforce including trend data from September 2010 and gender breakdown. The most recent statistics were published on 5 September 2023 and show workforce data as at 31 March 2023. Please note that due to the nature of the relationship with dental independent contractors, in that they may choose to serve both NHS and private patients, NES is unable to provide WTE figures.

Your letter also requests detail on the number of funded dentistry places for home-based students at Scottish universities. This information is published by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) with information on [overall funded places](#) per sector and specific dental [intake targets](#) available on an annual basis. Please note that intake targets published by SFC do not differentiate between home (Scottish funded) and other UK nation students. While I referred in my previous letter to the necessary suspension of undergraduate and vocational training for dentistry during the height of the pandemic, it is worth noting that this interruption in training will result in only a temporary reduction in workforce. Dental training has now fully resumed and, as noted in the SFC intake targets, we are back to training around 160 dentists per year which is equivalent to 5% of the overall workforce.

Finally, you have requested further detail on the Scottish Government's long-term plans for sustainability of the dental workforce. As noted during the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health's appearance at the Covid-19 Recovery Committee on 29 June 2023, the Minister is currently in discussion with her ministerial counterparts from across the UK nations to understand how we can best speed up dental workforce entrance, and we look forward to sharing more detail from those discussions in due course.

I trust that the responses and further information provided above are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Lamb  
DG Health and Social Care

